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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Georgia's New "Quality Rated" Program Marks Another Milestone

Over 1,000 early learning programs have voluntarily enrolled in rating program

ATLANTA, Ga., (October 22, 2012) – Bobby Cagle, commissioner of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), announced today that in less than 10 months, more than 1,000 child care programs have enrolled in Quality Rated, Georgia's new voluntary system to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs.

Similar to rating systems for other service industries like restaurants and hotels, Quality Rated identifies early care and education programs that meet a set of standards exceeding the state's minimum licensing requirements. Quality Rated launched in January, 2012. Quality Rated uses one, two and three stars to indicate programs that meet defined program standards beyond Georgia's minimum licensing requirements.

"Programs participating in Quality Rated support the whole child and prepare them for ongoing success in life," said Commissioner Cagle. "Now with over 1,000 child care programs voluntarily enrolling in less than ten months, you can see how Quality Rated is being enthusiastically embraced by early childhood educators all across the state." Cagle said programs choosing to participate in Quality Rated become eligible for free professional development, technical assistance, and financial incentive packages supported by foundations and businesses.

The initial incentive of \$1,000.00 worth of materials is available to programs participating in technical assistance programs with local child care resource and referral agencies. The second incentive of \$500.00 is awarded to participating programs submitting a completed Quality Rated portfolio thereby agreeing to an onsite evaluation within 90 days using the Environment Rating Scales instrument. Bonus packages to support ongoing quality improvement are awarded to programs at each of Quality Rated's one, two or three star levels. The portfolio incentives and bonus packages are distributed by the Georgia Family Connection Partnership.

In September, Justus Kidz, a family day care home operated by Linda Davis in Buford, Georgia, became the first child care program in Georgia to be recognized for exceeding the state's childcare licensing requirements with a Quality Rating of two stars. This week, Suezenette McDonald's family day care Explorations Christian Academy in Lawrenceville completed its Quality Rated evaluation with an impressive three-star rating.

Parents whose children receive subsidized child care through the Childcare and Parents Services Program (CAPS) also win with Quality Rated. Beginning in July, 2013, CAPS intends to implement tiered reimbursement for Quality Rated programs that serve children receiving subsidized care. Tiered reimbursement means that child care subsidy payments will be based on the quality level of the program. The higher the Quality Rated level, the higher the subsidy reimbursement. According to a recent report by the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute, a quarter of Georgia children under age five years receive some kind of subsidized child care.

In July 2013, families will be able to verify if a provider is voluntarily agreeing to meet higher standards by participating in Quality Rated and to see the quality rating they have achieved by visiting the Bright from the Start website at www.dec.state.ga.us.

Child care programs may learn more about Quality Rated and sign up for a Quality Rated orientation session sponsored by the local child care resource and referral agency at: <https://www.cnp2000.dec.state.ga.us/QualityRatedTraining/Splash.asp> or visit the Quality Rated webpage at <http://www.qualityrated.dec.state.ga.us> where eligible programs can begin the application process. For answers to questions about Quality Rated, call the Quality Rated Help Desk at 1-855-800-7747.

About Bright from the Start

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.decal.ga.gov.